

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 184038

ORIGIN NASA-02

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: TSPA

SUBJECT: SPACE SHUTTLE CONTINGENCY PLANNING

1. IN FURTHERANCE OF THE EXPLORATION OF OUTER SPACE FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, THE UNITED STATES IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING THE SPACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (SPACE SHUTTLE), WHICH WILL BE THE NEXT GENERATION OF MANNED FLIGHT. SHUTTLE ORBITAL FLIGHT TESTS ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1979. THE COMPLETE SYSTEM WILL BECOME FULLY OPERATIONAL AND AVAILABLE TO USERS IN MID-1980.

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PAGE 02 STATE 184038

2. PREVIOUS U.S. MANNED SPACEFLIGHT MISSIONS RETURNED TO EARTH, LANDED AND WERE RECOVERED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. THE SPACE SHUTTLE WILL LAND ON DESIGNATED AIRFIELDS MUCH LIKE A CONVENTIONAL AIRCRAFT. THIS CONCEPT WILL ALLOW REUSE OF THE SPACE VEHICLE RESULTING IN LOWER COSTS TO USERS OF THE SYSTEM.

3. THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHUTTLE. MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE

EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY (ESA) ARE DESIGNING AND BUILDING THE SPACELAB WHICH WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO THE SHUTTLE PROVIDING A LABORATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR EXPERIMENTORS WORLD-WIDE. CANADA IS DESIGNING AND BUILDING A REMOTE MANIPULATOR SYSTEM (RMS) TO HANDLE PAYLOADS IN SPACE.

4. NORMAL END-OF-MISSION LANDINGS WILL BE MADE AT THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (KSC), FLORIDA OR EDWARDS AFB, CALIFORNIA (EAFB).

5. MISSION PLANNING ALSO ENTAILS CONSIDERATION OF ABNORMAL OR EMERGENCY CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD CAUSE EARLY TERMINATION OF A FLIGHT. DURING PORTIONS OF EARLY FLIGHTS, RETURN TO KSC OR EAFB MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE DUE TO ORBITAL FLIGHT PATH CONSTRAINTS, DARKNESS OR ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. IF SUCH AN EMERGENCY CONDITION SHOULD ARISE REQUIRING IMMEDIATE LANDING FOR CREW SAFETY REASONS, NASA IS EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF USING SUITABLE WORLD-WIDE AIRFIELDS FOR SHUTTLE LANDINGS.

6. A PRELIMINARY SURVEY HAS BEEN CONDUCTED OF AIRFIELDS WHOSE LISTED CAPABILITIES MATCH CRITERIA REQUIRED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 184038

SAFE SHUTTLE LANDING OPERATIONS. CRITERIA CONSIDERED WAS RUNWAY LENGTH OF AT LEAST 10,000 FEET AND WIDTH OF 150 FEET, TACTICAL AIR NAVIGATION (TACAN) OR A COMBINATION OF VHF OMNI RANGE AND TACAN (VORTAC) GROUND NAVIGATION SYSTEM WITHIN 20 N MILES OF RUNWAY, AIR-TO-GROUND UHF VOICE CAPABILITY, ACCEPTABLE CLIMATOLOGY AND SPARSE POPULATION WITHIN 5,000 FEET OF RUNWAY. SOME 76 AIRFIELDS WERE CONSIDERED IN INITIAL SCREENING BUT HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO THE FOLLOWING:

A. KADENA AB, OKINAWA

B. CLARK AB, PHILIPPINES

C. INCIRLIK CDI, TURKEY

D. ROTA NAVAL STATION AND/OR TORREJON AB, SPAIN.

7. THE AGREEMENT ON THE RESCUE OF ASTRONAUTS, THE RETURN OF ASTRONAUTS, AND THE RETURN OF OBJECTS LAUNCHED INTO OUTER SPACE (TIAS 6599), WHICH ENTERED INTO FORCE DECEMBER 3, 1968, HAS BEEN SIGNED, RATIFIED OR ACCEDED TO BY TURKEY

AND THE PHILIPPINES; JAPAN AND SPAIN HAVE NOT. ARTICLE 2 OF THE TREATY REQUIRES CONTRACTING PARTIES TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO RESCUE AND ASSIST PERSONNEL IF A SPACE-CRAFT LANDS IN THEIR TERRITORY DUE

TO AN ACCIDENT, DISTRESS OR EMERGENCY.

8. IF REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT AN EMERGENCY LANDING, THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS AND SERVICES WOULD BE REQUIRED:

A. AIRSPACE CLEARANCE FOR THE LANDING WITHIN POSSIBLY 90 MINUTES.

B. TOWER ASSISTANCE TO SHUTTLE CREW VIA UHF
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PAGE 04 STATE 184038

COMMUNICATIONS PASSING TERMINAL LANDING CONDITIONS.

C. POSSIBLE CREW EGRESS ASSISTANCE.

D. FIRE AND CRASH RESCUE SERVICES.

E. SECURITY FOR THE ORBITER AND CREW AFTER
LANDING.

F. POSSIBLE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CREW.

G. CUSTOMS CLEARANCE FOR RETURN OF ASTRONAUTS
AND SHUTTLE.

H. EXPEDITED VISA ISSUANCES FOR NASA RECOVERY
PERSONNEL WHO WOULD DEPLOY TO EFFECT RETURN OF ORBITER.

I. EXPEDITED LOGISTICS AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHT AND
LANDING CLEARANCES.

9. NASA WOULD LIKE TO PLAN FOR USE OF THESE AIRFIELDS
IF NEEDED. EMBASSIES ARE REQUESTED TO EVALUATE THE
POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF APPROACHING HOST GOVERNMENTS
CONCERNING THIS EXERCISE AND ADVISE BY AUGUST 20 OF ANY
KNOWN OBJECTIONS OR SUGGESTED APPROACHES WHICH MIGHT BE
MADE. NO CONTACT WITH HOST GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE MADE
AT THIS TIME. IF DEPARTMENT OF STATE PERCEIVES NO OB-
JECTION, AN APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION TAILORED TO LOCAL
CIRCUMSTANCES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN WITH HOST GOVERNMENT
LATER THIS SUMMER.

10. A SITE SURVEY AND BRIEFING VISIT WILL BE SCHEDULED,
UPON AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE FROM HOST COUNTRY, TO PROVIDE
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PAGE 05 STATE 184038

GREATER INFORMATION AND DISCUSS DETAILED REQUIREMENTS
WITH APPROPRIATE BASE COMMANDERS AND HOST GOVERN-
MENT OFFICIALS IF REQUIRED.

11. IT IS TO BE EMPHASIZED THAT THE USE OF FOREIGN
AIRFIELDS WILL ONLY BE CONSIDERED IN A DIRE EMERGENCY.

THE PROBABILITY OF SUCH A LANDING IS EXTREMELY REMOTE.
HOWEVER, IF A NEED SHOULD ARISE, THE SUCCESS OF THE
OPERATION WILL BE DEPENDENT UPON THE ADEQUACY OF
PRE-MISSION PLANNING. CHRISTOPHER

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